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QUEEN ELIZABETH WOODVILLE.

FROM H. M. STATE PAPER OFFICE.

THE facsimile of a document preserved among the Public Records, will be interesting to all Kentish men, to say nothing of the ladies of that county. It relates to one of the two women of Kent who had the honour to become Queens of England; being the receipt of Elizabeth, the widow of King Edward IV., for the sum of £30, the arrears of her half-year's pension.

The connexion of this illustrious lady with the county of Kent, through her father, Sir Richard Woodville, is too well known to need recapitulation; but her courtship and marriage with the King are so quaintly described in "The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke," as to excuse the introduction here of an extract from that old Chronicle.—

"The King being on huntyng in the forest of Wychwood besyde Stonnystratforde, came for his recreacion to the manor of Grafton, where the duches of Bedford soiorned, then wyfe to syr Richard Woduile, Lord Ryuers, on whom then was attendyng a doughter of hers, called dame Elizabeth Greye, wydow of syr Jhon Grey, Knight, slayn at the last battell of sainte Albon's, by the power of Kyng Edward. This wydow hauyng a suit to y^e Kyng, either to be restored by hym to some thyng taken from her, or requyryng hym, of pitie, to have some augmentacion to her liuyng, founde such grace in the Kynges eyes, that he not onely fauored her suyte, but mucche more phantasied her person, for she was a woman more of formal countenance, then of excellent beantie, but yet of such beantie & fauor, that with her sober demeanure, louely lokyng, and

femynne smylyng (neither to wanton nor to humble) besyde her toungue so eloquent, and her wit so pregnant, she was able to ravishe the mynde of a meane person, when she allured and made subject to her y^e hart of so great a King. After that Kyng Edward had well considered all the linyamentes of her body, and the wise and womanly demeanure that he saw in her, he determined first to attempt, if he might prouoke her to be his souereigne lady, promisyng her many gyftes and fayre rewardes, affirmyng farther, y^t if she therunto condescend, she might so fortune of his peramour and concubyne, to be chaunged to his wyfe and lawfull bedfelow; which demaunde she so wisely, and with so couert speache aunswered and repugned, affirmyng that as she was for his honor farre unable to be hys spouse and bedfelow; so for her awne poore honestie, she was to good to be either hys concubyne, or souereigne lady: that where he was a littell before heated with the darte of Cupido, he was nowe set all on a hote burnyng fyre, what for the confidence that he had in her perfyte constancy, and the trust that he had in her constant chastitie, & without any farther deliberacion, he determined with him selfe clerely to marye with her, after that askyng counsaill of them, whiche he knewe neither woulde nor once durst impugne his concluded purpose.

“But the duches of Yorke hys mother letted it as much as in her lay, alledgyng a precontract made by hym with the lady Lucye, and diverse other lettes: all which doubttes were resolved, and all thinges made clere, and all cauillacions auoyed. And so, priuilie in a mornyng he married her at Grafton, where he first phantasied her visage.”

It is not our intention to trace the fortunes and misfortunes of this illustrious lady; it will be sufficient, for the purpose of this notice, to draw attention to the document before us. In addition to its interest for the inhabitants of Kent, it is a record of great historical importance (now for the first time brought forward), because it proves that her son-in-law, King Henry VII., has been misrepresented and unjustly blamed for his treatment of this Queen; it being alleged that he seized all her lands and possessions, and confined her in the Abbey of Bermondsey, in Southwark, where she shortly after died.

Be hit remembred that I quene Elizabeth late
wyffe to the excellent pryncer hunte Edward the
my^{te} have rejoynded the xxij day of may the vijth yere
of hunte herre the vijth of John lord denham tresorer
of. yngland be the handes of thomas stobon of
the reseynto xxx^{ij} to the pty of payment of £
£ to me at stob last past do hit
agreynt be my dunnets granntyd to hunte ~~to~~
the wytnes wher of I have endosyd thys byll
wyth my hand the daye yere abovesaid
Elizabeth

Now this receipt, in conjunction with the Letters Patent, dated 19th February, 5 Hen. VII., proves that (supposing even the King had seized her possessions, of which, however, there is no proof on record), Henry VII. granted her an annuity of £400 for life, equal to at least £4000 a year of the present money.

In addition to this document, two others, bearing the signature of the Queen, are extant in the Public Record Office: one, a letter in Latin, addressed to her husband, King Edward IV.; the other, addressed to Sir William Stoner, and dated from her manor of Greenwich, in Kent, is here given as a specimen of a royal letter of that period.—

“By the Quene.

“Trusty and welbeloved, We grete you wel. And where as we understand, by report made unto us at this tyme, that ye have taken upon yow now of late to make maistries withynne our Forest and Chace of Barnewod and Exsille, and there, in contempt of us, uncourteisly to hunt and slee our Deer withynne the same, to our grete mervaille and displeasir, We wol ye wite that we entend to sew suche remedy therynne as shall acorde with my Lordes lawes. And where as we ferthermore understand that ye purpose, under colo^r of my Lordes Commys-sionne in that behalf graunted unto you, as ye sey hastily to take the vieu and reule of our game of Dere withynne our said Fo- rest and Chace, We wol that ye shew unto us or our Counselle, yo^r said Commissionne, if any suche ye have, And in the mean season that ye spare of huntynge withynne our said Forest or Chace, as ye wol answeere at your perille. Yeven under our signet, at our Maner of Grenewiche, the first Day of August.

“ (Signed) ELYSABETH.

“*Addressed:* To our trusty and welbeloved Sir William Stoner, Knight.”